

**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES - DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES  
PUBLIC HEALTH - DISEASE CONTROL PROGRAMS**

**VETERINARY PUBLIC HEALTH AND RABIES CONTROL**

**FMD Epidemic in Great Britain Winds Down**

All the people suspected of having foot-and-mouth disease have been given the all clear. The public health laboratory service said 21 people were tested for the virus and all proved negative. They are now being offered antibody tests which cannot take place until about two weeks after their illnesses ended. Some people can develop antibodies to foot-and-mouth when they have been in contact with it without becoming ill.

The epidemic, which also spread into Ireland and the European continent, shut Britain's livestock out of international trade. Restrictions on movement in the countryside, intended to curb the disease, hurt the tourist industry, notably in the Lake District, which was in hard-hit Cumbria county. So far more than 1,560 British farms have been hit by the foot-and-mouth virus, but the incidence has fallen sharply. The government is turning its attention to programs to help farmers and the tourist industry bounce back.

The number of new cases has declined steadily from a high of more than 40 per day at the peak of the outbreak (Table 1). Britain's all consuming battle against FMD, deploying thousands of government veterinarians and even the army, is reportedly under control. As a result, the government has relaxed its policy of slaughtering livestock on farms next to infected sites, and has lifted restrictions in FMD infected areas, affecting some 16,000 farms.

<b>Foot-and-Mouth Disease at a Glance</b>	
Total number of confirmed FMD cases	1,567
No. animals slaughtered	2,474,000
Animals awaiting slaughter	99,000
Carcasses awaiting disposal	44,000

*Source: Maff as of 5/7/01*

**Table 1**      On Monday, 3 cases of FMD were confirmed. The number of animals slaughtered represents 2.5 percent of the nation's herds. The government expects to spend \$820 million to compensate farmers for slaughtered animals.

## **Blair Says Cattle Disease Is Near End - Elections Due**

Last month, as Britain's worst recorded outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease ravaged herds, damaged tourism and threatened a plague of political troubles, elections were postponed. Today, the number of animals slaughtered approaches 2.5 million. This month, Prime Minister Tony Blair said that Britain was in the homestretch of its race to contain a ruinous epidemic of foot-and-mouth disease. He called the next United Kingdom general election for June 7.

The Prime Minister has been under pressure to pronounce victory over FMD, not only for electoral reasons but also to try to lure back the foreign tourists, many of them Americans, who have been avoiding Britain because of the outbreak. With a keen eye on travelers, Prime Minister Tony Blair has repeatedly said Britain was open, "for business and pleasure."

As the numbers of slaughtered sheep, pigs and cattle climbed into the millions, the government mobilized the army to help dispose of the carcasses. Tony Blair reported, "It has probably been the biggest peacetime logistical challenge that the army has faced. The scale of combating foot-and-mouth disease has far exceeded, for example, the logistical demands even of the Gulf War."

## **Sunshine Puts Britain Back in Business**

Britain was open for business again Monday as a sunny bank holiday brought renewed confidence in the countryside and a return to road jams. Day-trippers took to their cars to visit the seaside or tourist centers in areas that so far this year have been perceived as out-of-bounds because of foot-and-mouth. In Scotland, motorists faced long queues at foot-and-mouth wheel washing points and back ups of five miles were reported in some areas.

Coastal resorts were a magnet for a large number of day-trippers. Brighton, Blackpool and Bournemouth were particularly busy. The easing of FMD restrictions allowed walkers in the Yorkshire Dales National Park to use about 12 miles of reopened paths away from livestock. The reopening of four footpaths to the summit of Snowdon was thought to have helped boost tourism to inland villages among the worst hit by the foot-and-mouth crisis. Hotel and bed and breakfast accommodation in Bournemouth were said to be fully booked and the New Forest also experienced an unexpectedly large influx of visitors.

## **Farmers Clash over Opening of Footpaths**

Eager to help the floundering tourist industry, the British government called for reopening of the country footpaths. Tourist organizations welcomed the move, but farmers said it was too soon to relax restrictions aimed at stopping the spread of foot-and-mouth. Farmers fear that premature relaxing of precautions could trigger a new eruption of FMD, as it did during the 1967 outbreak. The English

Tourism Council warned the Government that the industry could lose up to 250,000 jobs and about 3,000 tourist businesses could close. Visitors were not visiting rural areas because they were distressed by pictures of funeral pyres and put off by footpath closures.

### **Woman Loses Court Bid to Save Sheep**

A woman last week failed to save her five pet sheep from being slaughtered as part of pre-emptive FMD cull. Carolyn Hoffe had barricaded the five rare Dutch sheep in the living room of her home to prevent Government officials from killing the animals. She launched a legal challenge at the Court of Session in Edinburgh, but following the three hour hearing, Lord Clarke said that he was not prepared to suspend the slaughter, which was carried out immediately.

### **Farmer Defies Slaughter of Healthy Cattle**

A Somerset farmer is prepared to fight to stop slaughtermen entering his farm to kill his "healthy" cattle. Farmer, Guy Thomas-Everard, who barricaded his farm gates to protect the 980 cattle on his 1,000-acre farm, was "furious" at the way he had been treated. The farmer celebrated Tuesday after a veterinarian declared his herd foot-and-mouth free. The farmer's father, Christopher, was in tears when the herd was declared free of FMD by a veterinarian. The farmer said a telephone network had been organized and he expected hundreds of people to turn up if the slaughtermen did arrive. The Ministry of Agriculture said no decision had made on seeking an injunction to access the farm.

The Ministry of Agriculture ordered the culling of up to 1,600 healthy animals at two farms between Dulverton and Bridgetown in Exmoor as a precaution against foot-and-mouth disease. The decision followed fears that a farm worker may have spread the disease there after visiting an infected site. Both sides are pursuing legal action.

### **Rare Sheep and Goats to be Spared**

Rare sheep and goats were spared last week in an easing of the "firebreak" culling of healthy animals policy. The policy change came six weeks after the National Sheep Association, the National Trust and national park authorities began calling for exceptions to be made for sheep essential to keeping the English uplands free of scrub.

### **FMD Increases the Demand for Artificial Insemination of Race Horses**

The demand for horse semen has increased fourfold during the FMD crisis because owners of mares have been reluctant to move their animals for fear of spreading the disease. A ban on using artificial insemination to breed racehorses is being flouted because of the foot-and-mouth epidemic according to some.

## **Oliver the Owl Saved**

An abandoned owl chick has been hand reared at an animal sanctuary after experts were unable to take him back to his nest because of FMD restrictions. The three-day-old tawny owl, named Oliver by rescuers, was discovered lying on an Ayrshire hillside by a shepherd more than three weeks ago. It is believed Oliver had fallen from his nest and been abandoned. Oliver could not be returned home because of access restrictions. Although the farmland near where Oliver was discovered was free of FMD, experts from the Wildlife Sanctuary could not gain access for fear of spreading foot-and-mouth disease. Oliver, who is now six inches high, was treated using a special heating pad to stop him from developing hypothermia.

## **Grouse Shoot Cancelled in FMD Areas**

The grouse shooting season will not open on the traditional starting date of August 12 in some areas of England and Scotland because of FMD, the National Gamekeepers' Organization said Wednesday. Pheasant shoots will be held. Most of those who rear pheasants have placed orders to restock over the summer for the season beginning on October first. The partridge and duck season, which begins a month earlier, could be affected in some areas. Deer stalking is banned country wide, although discussions with Ministry of Agriculture is under way to have the restrictions eased. Deer numbers are high because fewer than usual have been culled.

## **FMD Fears Grow Over Meat Smuggling**

Illegal consignments of meat potentially infected with the foot-and-mouth virus are still being smuggled into Britain and could spark a new outbreak of the disease. Most of the meat is destined for private use or for ethnic restaurants. Customs raids on three aircraft at Heathrow Airport two weeks ago found more than half a ton of meat in personal baggage from Nigeria, Ghana and China. All of those countries have endemic foot-and-mouth disease and illegally imported meat from the Far East is seen as the most likely source of the current epidemic.

The seized meat, known as "bush meat", consisted of antelope, monkey, dried fish and other unidentifiable pieces. Foot-and-mouth can survive for six months in dried meat, and officials believe the amount arriving in Britain is at least ten times greater than what is detected at airports. The revelations will come as an embarrassment to the Government after a week in which it declared the epidemic had been brought under control. Experts warn that the massive influx of illegal meat, thought to total more than 1,000 tons a year, could seriously undermine the slaughter program that has seen the flow of new cases of the virus slow to under ten a day.

## **FMD Setback**

A setback to the easing of the foot-and-mouth crisis came last week when the Ministry of Agriculture

announced that livestock on Exmoor would be culled for the first time. The animals had been visited by a farmer at the center of an outbreak in Wiveliscombe, Somerset, some 15 miles away. More than a dozen other premises were visited by the farmer, Rob Norman as well. Some 5,000 livestock are being slaughtered or facing slaughter.

### **Extra Aid for Rural Firms**

Countryside businesses hit by the foot-and-mouth crisis are to receive a multi-million dollar government aid program. The Conservatives dismissed the extra funding as a "pre-election gimmick" and said it came more than a month after they proposed measures to help struggling rural businesses.

Environment minister Michael Meacher announced the increase in aid Monday, saying the cash would be targeted at the areas severely affected by the outbreak. The recovery fund is to help small and medium sized businesses in areas worst hit by closed footpaths and the absence of tourists. The money will help to create a Rural Business Recovery Fund. The Government is considering offering early retirement payments to those who want to leave agriculture. A significant numbers of farmers whose animals had been slaughtered are expected to quit.

Nonetheless, many rural businesses dismissed the aid package and made plans to demonstrate outside parliament. Rural business owners said no money had reached them, and that the government's idea of skills seminars was a farce; they wanted cash compensation and the opening of footpaths.

### **European Union Eases Foot-and-Mouth Bans**

European Union veterinary experts have agreed to relax foot-and-mouth restrictions on the movement of cattle and pigs in most of the 15-nation bloc. An EU-wide ban on the movement of sheep and goats remains in force. The move reflects growing confidence that the disease, which is well established in Britain, will not spread further in mainland Europe. All curbs on Britain, including the transportation of livestock and meat exports, are to be kept in place at least until June 19.